

Technology – At What Cost?

✘ I don't get texting. I don't text and I'm not sure my cell phone even has the capacity to text although my husband says it does. Besides, what could possibly be so important when I'm in a grocery store, restaurant or in my car, that I would have to text someone? If I have something to say to someone, I wait until I'm home and pick up the phone or email them.

Now I do know that my niece has to text her babysitter otherwise the teenager won't call her back. That's the way it is now. But I really don't get it. I love the sound of my husband's voice and I guess he's used to my Brooklyn accent, so we call each other a lot. I enjoy using Skype because it brings me and my family another step closer than the telephone. But that's just me.

We're told all these new advances in technology are supposed to improve and increase our ability to communicate with one another. What I see is a growing lack of interpersonal interaction. Instead of enjoying each other's company, I see young people sitting together, texting, and ignoring one another; no one is talking. They're all on their little machines thumbing messages to someone rather than talking to the person next to them.

I've even sat with a young man in a restaurant who was holding his phone under the table, texting away, hoping none of us would notice but we all did. Now how rude is that?

My husband tells me there are now cell phones with two cameras that enable a person to text while they're walking and still be able to see the street in front of them on their screen. How insane is that? I foresee plenty of lawsuits by people being hit by cars because they weren't watching where they were going.

The use of Twitter and Facebook and other social media networks has also added a dehumanization and anonymity factor into the mix which makes it possible for anyone to say anything without any fear of reprisal. It's also allowed for schoolyard bullies to do the same damage, except they can now hide behind their computers.

I saw an interview with the creator of Pandora Radio and he was asked, "if you could advise students in college today what they should focus on, what would it be?" I was surprised when he said "public speaking" but I guess when young people can't or don't even talk to the person sitting next to them except monosyllabically, the number of articulate teens dwindles while a growing number are incapable of speaking to anyone especially a large audience.

Another thing I don't get is the shorthand of texting. I guess if you're limited to the number of characters you're allowed in a text message it might make sense, but when I'm on Twitter, I find it far more interesting to figure out a way to succinctly say something using real words.

I've even heard of a teacher who gave her students an assignment to send a note by mail and actually had to take the time to show them how to fold the paper, address an envelope, and put a stamp on it. I actually feel sorry for young people today who'll never experience receiving a beautifully handwritten passionate love letter in the mail from their beloved. Instead, they've probably grown accustomed to texts that say, "Wanna hook up?" Very sad.

I wonder what our eloquent Founding Fathers would think about all this. I'll bet they'd be shocked to learn how far we've advanced technologically yet have lost our ability to interact and communicate with one another.

I'm going to say they'd agree with me and I've no doubt if they were going to text, they'd write, without contractions,

of course, "IDNGI, but if you do, God bless you."